



THE HOPE OF THE POOR SHALL NOT PERISH FOREVER!

This is the title of Pope Francis' message for the **3rd World Day of the Poor**, which takes place on the 33rd Sunday of ordinary time, and therefore on November 17 for this year. Let me highlight some key points of this very challenging message. The title refers to Psalm 9:19: "The poor are not forgotten to the end, the hope of the unfortunate does not perish forever". These words of the psalm, which are still very topical, are intended to restore to the poor, the hope lost in the face of injustice, suffering and the precariousness of life. As in the psalmist's time, there are now serious injustices, unacceptable inequalities and blatant exploitation of the small and the poor, reduced to new forms of slavery. And Pope Francis lists several of them: families who leave their lands to find ways to survive elsewhere, orphans who have lost their parents or are violently separated from them, young people who cannot find work, victims of new forms of violence, prostitution and drugs, millions of immigrants, homeless and marginalized people, etc. The worst part is that we often remain insensitive to their cries and presence that we try to forget or make invisible.

But the poor is the one who trusts the Lord and knows that God cannot abandon him. Because God acts in favor of the poor. He is the one who "listens", "intervenes", "protects", "defends", "saves". Didn't the Son of God identify himself with the poor, the oppressed and the humble? Moreover, Jesus inaugurates his Kingdom by placing them at the centre and entrusts us with the mission of building his Kingdom and giving hope to the poor. This is the program that is entrusted to all our Christian communities: to give hope, to restore trust, to be close to the poor and the little ones. By giving us the example of Jean Vanier, Pope Francis strongly invites us to opt for the little ones, for those whom our society rejects or puts aside.

As Pope Francis writes so well, "our commitment, on this World Day, and especially in everyday life, must not be limited to assistance initiatives... but must aim to strengthen in everyone the maximum attention due to all people in distress". Certainly this attention of love consists of material help but is expressed much through consolation and spiritual attention. And quoting Pope Francis again: "The poor also approach us because we give them food, but what they really need goes beyond the hot dish or sandwich we offer. The poor need our hands to get up, our hearts to feel the warmth of affection again, and our presence to overcome loneliness. They just need love.

May we hear the call of Pope Francis and respond generously to it! May we feel even more strongly the need to bring comfort and hope to the poor! May this World Day strengthen in us the desire to work effectively so that "no one feels deprived of solidarity and proximity" (n. 10 of Pope Francis' message, message published on June 13, 2019)!

Your Bishop Noel!